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Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections: election of 47 members of the Human Rights Council

Note verbale dated 10 April 2006 from the Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The Permanent Mission of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and, with reference to its note dated 6 April 2006 announcing Sri Lanka's candidature to the Human Rights Council, has the honour to present an aide-memoire in accordance with resolution 60/251 detailing pledges and commitments on human rights in support of Sri Lanka's candidature and, if elected, how Sri Lanka aims to play a constructive role in the Human Rights Council.

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Annex to the note verbale dated 10 April 2006 from the Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Aide-memoire

1. Sri Lanka has decided to present its candidature to the Human Rights Council at the election to be held at the United Nations General Assembly on 9 May 2006.

2. Sri Lanka attaches great importance to the work of the Human Rights Council. If elected, Sri Lanka will make a constructive contribution to the deliberations of the Council for the promotion and protection of human rights.

3. Sri Lanka served in the Commission on Human Rights during the periods 1957-1959, 1985-1990, 1992-2000 and 2003-2005 and played an active and constructive role, including as Vice-Chairman and Coordinator of the Asian Group.

4. Sri Lanka is a party to all seven major human rights instruments and to the First Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. Accordingly, Sri Lanka has maintained a consistent policy of cooperation and open and constructive engagement with all United Nations human rights treaty bodies, through the submission of periodic reports.

5. Throughout, the Government of Sri Lanka has also followed a consistent policy of cooperation and open and constructive engagement with the special procedure mechanisms of the Commission on Human Rights as demonstrated by extending regular invitations to such mechanisms to undertake missions in Sri Lanka.

6. The Government of Sri Lanka invited the Working Group on Disappearances to undertake missions in 1991, 1992 and 1999 and the Committee against Torture in 2000. The Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions (two visits) and the Special Rapporteur on the freedom of religion or belief have undertaken missions in Sri Lanka at the invitation of the Government. Furthermore, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Internally Displaced Persons and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict have also undertaken missions in Sri Lanka on the invitation of the Government.

7. Sri Lanka also plays an active role in the promotion of international humanitarian law. The National Committee on International Humanitarian Law and the Directorate of Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law of the Sri Lanka Army have been lauded by ICRC for their contribution in this field and in particular the recent passage of legislation to give effect to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and for the protection of the ICRC symbols.

8. As a manifestation of the Government's deep commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights, the President of Sri Lanka has now appointed a Cabinet Minister in charge of the subject of human rights.

9. In pursuit of its commitment to the further promotion and protection of human rights, Sri Lanka will soon be undertaking the following activities:

- Take appropriate implementation measures in respect of relevant recommendations made by the human rights treaty bodies after considering the periodic reports submitted by Sri Lanka in the past, through the Permanent Standing Committee on Human Rights Issues, co-chaired by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs and Human Rights.
- Build the capacity of the Ministry of Human Rights, the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka and other independent statutory bodies established as a part of the national human rights protection system.
- Introduce a Human Rights Charter in line with the policy statement made by the President of Sri Lanka soon after assuming office.
- Invite the Special Rapporteur on the freedom of expression and opinion and also the Special Rapporteur on the question of torture to undertake missions in Sri Lanka.
- Cooperate with human rights treaty monitoring bodies by submitting future periodic reports on time.
- Become a party to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.
- Make a financial contribution towards the voluntary fund for technical cooperation in the field of human rights.

10. Recognizing that development, peace and security and human rights are interlinked and mutually reinforcing, if elected, Sri Lanka, as a member of the Human Rights Council, will:

- Continue to play its traditional role as a consensus builder and participate actively and constructively in all deliberations of the Council for the promotion and protection of human rights in all parts of the world and for the furtherance of international human rights and humanitarian law. In this regard, Sri Lanka will also keep in mind the mandate given by resolution 60/251 to the Human Rights Council and in particular that the Council will be responsible for promoting universal respect for the protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction of any kind and in a fair and equal manner.
- Work with like-minded countries to assist the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to formulate proposals for treaty body reform with a view to strengthening and making the United Nations treaty body system more effective and in line with present-day requirements of Member States.
- Play an advocacy role to broad base the adherence to all seven major human rights instruments with a view to promoting human rights of all sections of society worldwide.